

A Tribute to The Life and Memory of Richard ("Pat") Kilpatrick



SCRIPTURE READINGS

²¹ “Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.” ²³ Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” ²⁴ Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” ²⁵ Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; ²⁶ and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this” ([John 11:21-26](#))? [\[1\]](#)

For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing ([2 Timothy 4:6-8](#)).
“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ²¹ that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me ([John 17:20-21](#)).

TRIBUTE TO THE LIFE AND MEMORY OF “PAT” KILPATRICK

Today, we gather to pay our respect for a warrior of the Cross of Jesus Christ. Our hearts are deeply saddened at the death of this loved one. We are here because we believe in God, we believe in Christ, and we believe in the Holy Spirit. Pat Kilpatrick was a good soldier of Jesus Christ. He too believed in God, in Christ, and in the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit as God’s guarantee that he would have eternal life when it came time for him to cross the great gulf between God and humanity. Almost two thousand years ago, Jesus prayed, shortly before His crucifixion, for Pat Kilpatrick. How do I know this?

Listen to this prayer in which Jesus prayed for Pat and for everyone else that is here today who believes in Jesus as God's Way of salvation:

“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message,²¹ that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me ([John 17:20-21](#)).

Pat was born on March 14, 1927 and passed into his eternal dwelling with God on February 3, 2004. Pat died just a few days before his seventy-seventh birthday. During his earthly sojourn, Pat can be reckoned as one of the great leaders within the Reformation Movement initiated by the Campbells and Stone. He was one of the great defenders of the unity for which Jesus prayed. Pat published a religious journal for thirty years (1973—2003). Brother Pat was never a “full-time” preacher, even though he preached for a number of congregations located in the following towns and states—Huntsville, Alabama; Ardmore, Tennessee; Madison, Alabama; New Hope, Alabama; and Greenfield, Alabama (where he was baptized). Pat had a tremendous religious heritage. His father, Robert F. Kilpatrick, preached for thirty-five years and established seventeen congregations, mostly in north Alabama. For the past twenty-three years, Pat was a member of the Grassy Church of Christ, a congregation that I worked with for seventeen years, located in Arab, Alabama.^[2]

It was during this time (my ministry with the Grassy Church of Christ) that Pat persuaded me to write for his journal. As a result of Pat's insistence, I became a writer. I will always be thankful for his assistance in teaching me writing skills. I remember the first essay that I wrote for his paper. He called and informed me that it took him several hours to go through my first paper in order to find synonyms to express my thoughts more clearly. If it had not been for Pat, I would never have become a writer. As a result of his efforts, I now have a web ministry—a ministry in which I post all my papers.

Not only do I owe my writing skills to Pat, but also I owe him gratitude for his teaching me about imputed righteousness and about worship. We traveled together on many occasions to various lectureships. During these trips together, he would share with me the subject of worship, a subject that took me a while to grasp. He called to my attention that nowhere in the New Testament are Christians ever told to come together to worship—worship is one's way of life twenty-four hours a day. For Pat, Christians assemble with other Christians because they are worshipers of God. This is an important distinction. Most of the divisions, not all, within the Churches of Christ, center on a so-called worship service with its five rituals that must be performed in a prescribed manner. In 2003, Pat published his book, *Restructuring the Church* in order to help Christians work through their traditions. This Book is divided into eight parts. In this publication, he analyzes worship, pattern theology, justification by faith, the church, imputed righteousness, Christian ethics, and so on. I wrote the Introduction to this Book.

One of his greatest contributions toward unity among God's people is found in his publication of *Ensign* for thirty years. He received hundreds of letters from around the world about how his paper had helped them in their spiritual journey. This paper led many Christians out of spiritual bondage. Three years after beginning the publication of *Ensign*, he felt the wrath of the congregation with whom he was identified (in Huntsville,

Alabama). The disturbance came over his views about the justification of sinners before God—justified by faith or justified by law. Pat took the position that one can only be justified by faith alone, not by works. As a result of this action of condemnation by the local congregation, he told me that this was probably the lowest point in his spiritual life. In 1997, during the month of April, he wrote me a letter about this reprimand by this body of believers: “Looking back on it I am convinced that God was behind it all because I was somewhat curtailed in what I wrote in the magazine in reference to ‘law and grace’ for I knew the effect it would have on our legalistic brethren in the congregation.” During this period of turmoil, he experienced spiritual depression. Pat told me that he received a letter from Carl Ketcherside encouraging him to continue to preach the Gospel and not to give up. In this letter, Ketcherside said to him that he should be proud to be kicked out of the congregation; this was much better than having his leg gnawed off in order to escape. Later Pat prayed for strength: “Lord, give me the courage to preach what I understand.”

Pat is in heaven today because of “imputed righteousness,” that is to say, a righteousness credited to him by God—a righteousness that can be received only through faith. Pat shared with me that he was not sure when he really came to understand “imputed righteousness.” But his thinking became solidified through his study of Anders Nygren’s *Commentary on Romans*. In 1975 (May, June, and July), he wrote a three part series on “imputed righteousness.” This focus was just one of the many issues that he stressed in his paper; he also placed great emphasis upon “unity in diversity.” He wanted God’s people to be one. He understood that Christians can no more all think alike than they can all look alike. He believed that all truth is true, but, at the same time, he also realized that all truth is not essential to salvation, else no one could be saved.

Book of Romans

Following this eulogy, the military service will conduct a military funeral in honor and memory of Pat Kilpatrick. This activity was to take place at the cemetery, but the family decided to conduct the military part at the “funeral home” since today is a rainy and cold day. As a result of this decision, the funeral director requested that I speak about thirty minutes instead of my ten minutes that I had planned to do. Pat would have been pleased with this decision. One of Pat’s favorite books in the Bible was the Book of Romans. I will briefly share with you some thoughts of Pat concerning this wonderful Book.

Pat enjoyed citing **Romans 1:16-17** in his teaching on the Book of Romans. These two verses set forth the very heart of this Epistle—justification by faith. Paul writes: “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile” (**1:16**). The Good News is about God’s Way of salvation in and through His Son Jesus. This Gospel is God’s power for the salvation of both men and women. Thus Paul writes with equal power the following words as he seeks to draw attention to the Gospel of God: “For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: ‘The righteous will live by faith’” (**1:17**). It is “in the gospel” that God reveals His method of justification. In the Greek text, Paul writes: “in it” (ἐν αὐτῷ, en autw), that is to say, in the Gospel. It is in this Gospel that God reveals a righteousness that comes directly from Himself. Paul expresses this truth this way: “righteousness from God (δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ dikaiosunh qou). In other words, Paul is saying that this

righteousness originates in God—God is its source or origin.

In **verse seventeen**, Paul zeros in on faith as the means of receiving this “righteousness from God.” He says that this is “a righteousness that is by faith from first to last” (ἐν κ πίστεω εἰς πίστιν, ek pistews eis pistin). Paul is emphasizing that this “righteousness from God” *begins* with faith and *ends* with faith. In **chapters 1 and 2**, Paul paints a rather dismal picture of both Jew and Gentile—both under condemnation. In **3:23**, Paul writes: “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” The Law of God shuts everyone’s mouth (**3:19**). Thus Paul says, “no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law” (**3:20**). But Paul does not stop with this rather dismal picture of the state of humanity. He goes on to say:

But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify.²² This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe (**3:21-22**).

Paul begins **3:21** with two of the greatest words in all of the English language—“But now.” “But now” (Νῦν Ἦ δεῖ, Nuni de) reveals His way of salvation that involves a “righteousness from God,” a righteousness that “comes through faith in Jesus Christ.” In the new aeon (Messianic age), one is “justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus” (**3:24**). The word *freely* in the Greek text is δωρεάν (dwrean), which is the same word employed in **John 15:25** in which Jesus says, “They hated me without reason.” The phrase “without reason” is the Greek word dwrean, which is translated in the KJV as “without a cause.” Paul, in **Chapter 4** of **Romans**, illustrates “without a cause” with the story of Abraham.

In the next four chapters, Paul illustrates that freedom from God’s wrath (**chapter 5**), freedom from the dominion of sin (**chapter 6**), freedom from the curse of the Law (**chapter 7**), and freedom from condemnation (**chapter 8**) are found only “in” and “through” Jesus Christ. The very end of **chapter 5**, Paul writes: “through Jesus Christ our Lord” (διὰ ἡς Ἰησοῦς Χριστοῦ, dia Ihsou Cristou) [**5:21**]; in **chapter 6**, he pens: “In Christ Jesus our Lord” (ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, en Cristw Ihsou) [**6:23**]; in **chapter 7**, he again focuses on Christ: “Through Jesus Christ our Lord” (διὰ ἡς Ἰησοῦς Χριστοῦ, dia Ihsou Cristou) [**7:25**]; and, finally, in **chapter 8**, he writes: “in Christ Jesus” (ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, en Cristw Ihsou) [**8:39**]. Paul alternates between “through” and “in.” In these four chapters (**5—8**), Paul amplifies, as it were, **Romans 1:16-17**). These thoughts on Romans set forth the emphasis of Pat in his explanation of the overall theme of the Book about “imputed righteousness,” that is to say, righteousness credited to one through faith in Jesus. This is how Pat knew that he had, and now has, eternal life.

NOTE FROM LAURA BELL ABOUT HER FATHER

Laura Bell, one of Pat’s daughters, requested that I read a note written by her concerning “the things that brought dad great joy:

1. His Lord
2. Preaching and teaching the Word

3. His children and especially his grandchildren
4. His church family at the Grassy Church
5. His best friend Dallas Burdette
6. Family reunions
7. Eating out with his brothers and sisters
8. Eating at Red Lobster
9. Eating
10. Playing his guitar and mandolin and making Laura sing with him
11. Listening to gospel music and old guitar country music
12. His flower and vegetable gardens
13. Working on his magazine The Ensign Fair
14. Long discussions of the Bible with whomever would stay up all night with him
15. Learning how to do things on the computer
16. Receiving e-mails both serious and funny
17. Ordering gadgets off the TV and catalogs
18. People from his past who would drop by to see him
19. Visits from his grandchildren
20. Having everyone over to swim in his pool
21. His shell collection
22. Watching Lonesome Dove over and over
23. Listening to Rush Limbaugh
24. His military career
25. All the people who wrote him and encouraged him

Laura closes this list with her farewell: “We will miss you dad, pappy, and granddad.” As we conclude this service in honor of a fallen fighter for Jesus, one is

conscious that his influence will continue for decades through his life and writings. I want his daughters and his sons and his grandchildren to reflect upon his faith and to emulate his faith in their day-to-day walk with God. It is time for us to say farewell. Pat, I say to you as an old soldier of the Cross, “Thank you for your faith and faithfulness to the cause of Christ.” Your children will miss you, your grandchildren will miss you, I will miss you, your readers will miss you, and the Grassy Church of Christ will miss you. So long until we meet again in the eternal abode of God.

PRAYER

O Lord our God and Father, enable us to claim the ministry left behind by Pat Kilpatrick, your son and our friend and brother in Christ. Help each of us to envision our own lives as lives of dedication to your service, just as Pat consecrated his life to your service. Give us grace to live our days in such a way that our lives and our deaths may be precious in your sight. You have given and now You have taken from us. But even in our grief and pain, we continue to call You “Blessed.” We offer our thanks for giving us the life of this dear soul and for the gift of many memories. Most of all, we thank You for the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. We offer our thanks in Christ’s name, Amen.

^[1] All Scripture citations are from the *New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996, c1984), unless stated otherwise.

^[2] For a brief biographical sketch of Pat’s life, see Dallas Burdette, “Biographical Material on the Life of R. L. Kilpatrick [ON-LINE]. Available from <http://www.freedominchrist.net> [accessed February 11, 2004], located under SERMONS AND ESSAYS and then under ELDERS/LEADERS.